IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant:	Chr. Hansen A/S	Examiner:	Davis, Ruth A
Serial #:	09/813,292	Group art unit:	1651
Filed:	21 March 2001	Docket:	030307-197
Title:	Method for supply of starter cultures having a consistent quality		

DECLARATION BY BØRGE KRINGELUM

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

I, Børge Kringelum having my residence at Vårbuen 48, DK-2750 Ballerup, Denmark, does state and declare as follows:

1. I am an employee at Chr. Hansen A/S, the assignee of the above patent application, and I hold a position as a dairy engineer. Furthermore, I am one of the inventors of the present invention.

2. I am a person skilled in the art to which the above application pertains.

3. I have read and understood the pending claims in that application as well as the office action related thereto dated November 5, 2003, and have the following comments:

4. I have collected data from our propagation factories in the United States to demonstrate that the claimed method according to the invention provides an unexpected advantage over the conventional method of making commercial starter cultures and thus involve a great economic benefit.

5. The conventional method of producing batches of commercial starter cultures begins for each batch at each different propagation factory with a stepwise propagation, i.e. in general two propagation steps, of cells contained in a mother culture of the cell, in order to be able to produce the necessary amount of inoculum material for the inoculation of the final inoculum medium to obtain the desired commercial starter culture.

According to the method of the present invention, batches of commercial starter cultures were produced by using subsets of a stock inoculum material for a direct one-step inoculation of the final inoculum medium to obtain the desired commercial starter cultures. All used subsets originate from the same stock inoculum material produced at our central propagation factory in Denmark.

6. A number of 457 batches of commercial starter culture produced by the conventional method were compared with 115 batches produced by the method of the invention with regard to percentage approved batches.

A batch is said to be approved if the number of cells and the metabolic activity fulfil specified requirements for approval. Furthermore, the test results for bacterial contamination must be passed, in order to get the final approval. If a batch of starter culture is not approved, the batch is to be discarded.

The following starter cultures were used in the above comparison example:

- *B. bifidum* strain